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ABSTRACT

This chapter gives a brief history of cooperative learning in Japan, describes several types of Japanese cooperative learning, offers short vignettes of modern situations in which cooperative learning has been effective, and concludes with thoughts about the future of cooperative learning in the Japanese context. Learning in Japan was structured along highly competitive lines until after World War II. This was the legacy of the Meiji era (1868-1912) and the Taisho Period (1912-1926). The shift to more cooperative forms of learning began in the postwar period, but intensified in the 1950s, particularly a new method termed Buzz Learning. Concerns grew that Japanese education was excessively group-oriented and gave short shrift to the individual, so that by the 1980s educational reformers began to look for ways to encourage individual growth and development in a Japanese setting. The common response was to promote instructional and personal guidance. Truly cooperative approaches are more successful in promoting and allowing individuality to flourish. Cooperative learning, supported by human trust, has brought positive educational outcomes even in countries that have cultural diversity. Therefore cooperative learning must be essential in the process of learning by human beings. Using cooperation that is a part of human nature can lead to an environment where children can develop their individuality. (Contains 44 references.) (KFT)

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Chapter 3

Cooperative Learning in Japan: History and Present Situation of Research and Implementation

Sugie Shuji

(Translated by Takeuchi Tomomi)

There are several forms of cooperative learning that have been influenced by the same Western thinkers, especially Dewey, but have gone in different directions than Western Cooperative Learning. This paper will first give a brief history of cooperative learning in Japan, will describe several types of Japanese cooperative learning, and then will give short vignettes of modern situations in which cooperative learning has been effective. The paper ends with some thoughts on the future of cooperative learning in Japanese schools.

Cooperative Learning Before and Just After World War II

Education in the Taisho Period (1912-1926)

In the Meiji era (1868-1912), a school was a place of competition where students strove against each other to make a successful career. However an international push for democracy after World War II led to a humanistic campaign in

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Japan based on the ideas of individual freedom, independence, and welfare. Under such circumstances, an attempt to create a new educational system was made, based on the independent autonomy of children. Foreign theorists F. W. Parker, J. Dewey, W. H. Kilpatrick, and H. Parkhurst introduced the principle that a school should be a fundamental institution of democracy. Therefore, lesson plans involving cooperative activities became popular.

Heiji Oikawa, who studied educational pedagogy and educational psychology in the United States, proposed what he called the "Dynamic Group Educational Method." His method attracted much attention at that time. His books (1912, 1915) described several ideas on how to make use of cooperative activities. Saito and Shimizu (1915), Sanada (1918), and Nagara (1920) also did research in education focusing on cooperation.

Education Immediately after World War II

Early in the Showa era (1926-1988), totalitarianism and militarism had a huge influence throughout Japan. School curricula required that students dedicate themselves to implicitly serve authority. During the process of democratization after Japan's defeat in 1945, it was determined that the previous educational system and curriculum needed democratic change.

At that time, one of the often-implemented methods was "Group Learning" (Suzuki, 1948), which focused on learner-centered activities in lessons. In this method, students chose a learning task depending on their interests and experiences. They then divided the task into parts. The class divided into small groups and each group took charge of one of the parts related to the topic. They worked to solve the problem cooperatively and when they solved it, they presented the findings to the class. This final step ensured that all the students shared an understanding of the subject matter. The Ministry of Education encouraged this kind of application as a democratic, fundamental means of fostering cooperative spirit and solidarity (The Ministry of Education, 1946).

Shift to Systematic Learning and Cooperative Learning

Shift to Systematic Learning

During the strengthening of the governmental trend towards conservatism in the 1950s, educational policy changed. The previous educational focus on learners' experience was criticized for students' lack of acquisition of basic knowledge. Conservatives complained that students were not taught to have a patriotic spirit or discipline. Populist reformists pointed out that the low level of basic education would not foster the learners' independent personality. Consequently "systematic learning" consisting of systematized lessons was proposed.

Cooperative Learning

In systematic learning the lesson tended to always be carried out as a whole class. However these were not the only changes being made. Many other methods such as "group dynamics" had been also introduced to Japan since 1950. A new method termed "Buzz Learning" (*BAZU gakusbu*) or small group learning, combining all these new learning methods with the experience accumulated from cooperative learning, was developed. Buzz Learning made use of small group activities while learners studied in the whole class.

Cooperative Learning Based on the Systematic Learning Method

Buzz Learning was named after the buzz sessions that occurred during the lesson. Originally, Buzz Learning was a teaching technique, but Yoshihisa Shioda (1912-1988) continued to research the classroom action and studied the psychology of learning, educational evaluation theory, and social psychology to make Buzz Learning a remarkable teaching theory in Japan.

Buzz Learning emphasized that human relations were essential in education. The idea was that trustworthy relationships among students, the teacher and the students, the teachers, the teachers and the school, and the school and the local community were a starting point of a broad educational effect. It had the same theoretical foundations of cooperative learning that not only made the relationships better, but also increased learners' motivation to study.

In Buzz Learning it was important to simultaneously study what happened during the process of the lesson. It meant that the use of small groups could accelerate acquisition of knowledge and improve the learning process. Hence, human relations and learners' interest in studying would grow at the same time. Buzz Learning stressed that principles of cooperation always had to be taught in school. Competition is not included in Buzz Learning owing to its negative effect. Shioda (1987) summarized Buzz Learning by saying, "Attention is paid not to differences but to shared points, not exclusionary logic, but coexistent logic." His research results have been reported by Shioda (1970), Shioda and Abe (1962), Shioda and Kajita (1976), Shioda and Yokota (1981), Shioda and Yonomiya (1970), and Shioda and Toyokawa City Chubu Elementary School (1965). His last book (Shioda, 1989) introduces Buzz Learning clearly.

Recent Concern with Cooperation in Education

Current Problems of Education in Japan

One may say that collectivism is one of the characteristics of Japanese culture. The meaning and actual situation of collectivism in Japan have been discussed

in many ways (Araki, 1973; Hamaguchi, 1977; Kan, 1971; Kawamoto, 1982; Minami, 1994). On the other hand, there are data that indicate that children are quite competitive (Toda, Shintsuha, McClintock, & Stetch, 1978). Recently other data show a lessening of collectivism among Japanese youth (Yamaguchi, 1991).

In the 1960s high economic growth in Japan led to dramatic changes in the social structure of the country. In education, competition among students increased, resulting in extraordinary pressure during examinations; success in these exams was instrumental in order to attain social and economic success. Even during the 1980s when economic growth stabilized, this competition did not abate.

These days, parents and educators in Japan consider that the maladjustment of children has become a large educational problem. It causes several serious problems like a psychologically-rooted refusal to attend school, bullying, and juvenile delinquency.

The number of elementary school children that refused to go to school increased from 3,679 in 1980 to 12,240 in 1994. In the case of junior high school, the number went up from 13,536 in 1980 to 51,365 in 1994 (according to Ministry of Education research). Bullying in the form of threats, teasing, exclusions from a group, violence, ignoring, and taking belongings away has become a serious social problem as well. In fact, a number of school children have committed suicide due to bullying. In 1996, bullying was reported to the Ministry of Education by 31.3% of elementary schools, 55% of junior high schools and 37.6% of high schools, resulting on an average 1.4 cases of bullying per school. In reality, however, there are probably more cases in Japanese schools that have gone unreported.

Instances of juvenile delinquency have also grown in number. Japan is at the third peak of juvenile delinquency since the 1970s. This peak is already the largest of the three since WWII. Many of the delinquencies are simple, such as stealing, but it has been spreading widely and the delinquents are getting younger. Thus there is a morality crisis in the educational system. One can assume that educational competition is a considerable factor in engendering these juvenile problems.

Concern with Cooperation as a Means of Solving Problems

Educational administration in Japan is centralized. The course of study defines the purposes and contents of learning and is set by the Ministry of Education. The curriculum has changed several times. The course of study in 1977 suggested two solutions to the educational problems: firstly, that students be given more opportunities to learn in a group environment, and secondly, that diffuse moral education be carried out in order to improve students' sense of ethics and value. These views are still current in the educational curriculum of 1989 which is dramatically different from that of 1977. Nevertheless, the 1989 curriculum is not practical enough to implement in the classroom because the underlying problems arising from the competitive educational culture remain.

When teachers encounter problems with students they generally make school rules stricter and reform the students by applying strong controlling measures. However these are not substantial solutions. What is worse, these solutions can cause different problems. The classroom teachers require and are seeking for solutions to deal with these problems.

Already there is a national Buzz Learning study organization. Their 28th national conference was held in 1996 and a total of 500 researchers, educators, and people involved with Buzz Learning participated. Teachers from elementary to high school were very interested in using cooperative principles to teach subjects, introduce computers into schools, cope with bullying, and make links with local society. The awareness of cooperative class grouping and its benefits as an educational option is becoming stronger.

Implementation and Research of Cooperative Learning Based on Buzz Learning

Buzz Learning and Classes: Lesson Model

Buzz Learning is a generic term for lesson practice activities that rely on existent trustworthy human relationships in the class to operate. It does not mean instruction following a fixed pattern. However, there are some lesson models based on previous implementations and practical research of Buzz Learning. One such model is "unit prospect learning" which is often put into practice to implement Buzz Learning. The procedure of the lesson model is as follows (Sugie, 1984):

(1) The teacher systematizes both the final learning tasks of one unit, which can be done for a few lessons, and subordinate learning tasks involved. In addition, he or she sets a learning aim to improve students' attitudes to study and personal relationships.

(2) In the first lesson, the teacher tests students on the subject matter and adequately explains the lesson plan in the unit. He or she also makes an effort to interest the students in the learning tasks. The students are made aware of the learning content and the schedule of a couple of lessons and roughly understand the purpose of the subordinate tasks they have to work on each lesson.

(3) From the second lesson, the teacher expresses clearly what the learning task is and carries out the lesson focusing on learner-centered solution processes. In each lesson, learners have to deal with the task by themselves first. They then get together in small groups to find a solution through discussion to share understanding. At that time the teacher has to point out clear group learning aims: "Make sure all in the group understand" and "Make sure each member of the group is able to explain the solution."

After the small group discussion, students present in front of the whole class what they have learned. The teacher selects interesting mistakes and gives correct answers. The students exchange their opinion within the whole class. In the end the teacher summarizes what the whole class has learned in the lesson. The teacher does not necessarily follow this procedure all the time, but has the flexibility to employ other ways like whole-class teaching and individual learning within Buzz Learning.

(4) In the last lesson of the unit, the students do the final task of the unit. The procedure is the same as in (3) and the teacher should have enough time to conclude the learning task and the task evaluation.

Main Point When Introducing Buzz Learning into a School

It would be more effective if cooperative learning is carried out with the support of the whole school. There would be more uniformity in how teachers teach and this would increase the possibility of consistent instruction to foster human relationships and improve attitudes to learning in the non-academic school activities. That is, a shared understanding of the value of cooperation helps students not to be preoccupied or confused by group learning activities.

For Buzz Learning to be put into practice and be supported by the whole school, teachers have to be specially aware of the meaning and procedure of Buzz Learning. They have to learn Buzz Learning from several manuals in special study meetings and need to change or adjust their previous fixed ideas of teaching to a more flexible view of teaching; from teaching to accept competition to cooperative teaching; from teaching to teach something to teaching to facilitate learning.

For students, particularly freshmen, the school should provide a manual of Buzz Learning and provide students with an opportunity to learn the procedure in the beginning of the year. This also gives new teachers an important opportunity to learn Buzz Learning. The teachers and the students need to share their understanding and create their own cooperative learning. This step is significant in the implementation of Buzz Learning.

A Case Study of Buzz Unit Prospect Learning

The awareness of unit purposes and tasks helps students acquire what they are expected to learn about the subject matter even though the teacher's explanation in the first lesson might take time to understand. Shioda, Nakano, and Sugie (1974), Shioda, Sugie, Shikanai, Fujita, Nakajima, and Yoshida (1975), and Ishida (1980) experientially found that understanding the purposes and tasks, the basic principles of "unit prospect learning," helps students' learning. Action research (Sugie & Ito 1983, 1988, 1990, 1993, Sugie, Kajita, & the Kasugai

City Arithmetic Study Club, 1989) and some case studies of buzz unit prospect learning have been reported. (Kasugai City Arithmetic Study Club 1988, 1989, 1990a, 1990b; Sugie, 1993).

Research suggests several things. Clarifying learning tasks means clarifying group tasks so that the important condition of cooperation is achieved. It is interesting to note that "slower" school children are more eager to cooperatively learn than the "advanced" children. They study at home more spontaneously than previously. Awareness of learning aims and of the purpose of the current unit in the context of the whole course is a factor to motivate students and to aid in understanding. Providing the slower students with an opportunity to know the buzz unit prospect can be useful to get them to acquire learning skills.

Language Education and Buzz Learning

There have been two test cases of Buzz Learning in English classes. In the first case, Inoue (1996; see also in this volume), who taught in a junior high school that had many delinquency-related problems, applied the basic principles of Buzz Learning for demotivated students. The students originally did not participate in the class positively. Their basic English ability was quite low. He attempted to motivate the students and make an academic atmosphere through the application of the principles of Buzz Learning.

The demotivated students did not speak, read, write, or express themselves. There was a lack of an academic environment conducive to the learning of English. However, this could be considered a natural response when the students do not trust the teachers. Inoue applied the fundamental principles of Buzz Learning during class; he always praised anyone that responded well and took care of each of the students. That is, he facilitated learning and tried to made a great effort to establish trust. His attempt worked not linearly, but gradually. The actual technique he used in the classes was pair work rapid reading with the aim that both participants in the pair achieved a level he set.

The second case, by Kachi (1996) in a junior high school, argued the usage of the scramble technique in the English class. The technique required learners to find a partner in the classroom for a dialogue. It operated in the same way as "free buzz" (created by Ichikawa, 1987), which does not employ fixed groups. The students change partners to talk about the given topic by using the phrase they have just learned. Some students may speak to only their friend or to another student of the same gender. Kachi made a checking card to collect the signatures of partners and gave them scores for their interactions; They could get higher scores depending on to whom they spoke. This way they had many opportunities to talk with many classmates in English and hence learn through interacting. He reported that when using this method there are still uncooperative students, but the class has become more animated.

In both cases, cooperative support of human relationships in out-of-subject activities was helpful in doing free buzz learning. Kachi also argued that the reason he applied Buzz Learning was simply because his school had a delinquency problem.

Expanding Applications of Buzz Learning

Dealing with Problems in Education through Contact with the Local Community

The application of cooperative guidance and learning would be a useful means to construct educational solidarity within local communities as well as within schools. Nagai and Sugie (1995) showed a successful outcome carried out by a cooperative community, both within and outside a junior high school in Himeji where the incidence of delinquency had been progressively increasing. The teachers had meetings with parents to discuss school problems and created opportunities of cooperative learning at the local level. Human relations based on trust with local support (a community willing to cooperate) led to a more positive result for overcoming delinquency. Funakoshi and Sugie (1997) reported a similar result of cooperative learning in a junior high school in Niigata.

Cooperative learning has also been used on an island in Hiroshima conducted with local community support (Hiroshima Prefecture, Toyo High School *Kyoikusuishin Kyougikai*, 1980). They tried to solve problems of *Buraku* discrimination, an underclass which is a vestige of the class system established in the Edo era, as well as to improve learning (Ochi, 1978). Using local resources brings the students to realize the value of their hometown.

Trustworthy human relationships, in addition to the support of the whole school coupled with local community involvement, provide a more effective mechanism for Buzz Learning. Such relationships start from the school.

Dealing with New Demands in Education in Response to the Times

In Japan there are several envisaged future needs in terms of internationalization, the information society, lifelong education, environmental studies, and other major social issues. What can be done to address them? In general, for instance, more English classes can be created for internationalization purposes as well as implementing computer class instruction for the emerging information society. In addition to the need to enrich the learning context, it is also suggested that children should start learning at a younger age. However such curriculum revolution is just a surface change to lead to a fruitful future for children.

International understanding starts with understanding human nature. If one cannot communicate with friends nearby, it is simply impossible to have international relationships. Nanjo Junior High School in Kasugai City (1988) has a unique curriculum consisting of buzz cooperative learning as well as an ex-

change program with Canada to complement an English course. They also have lessons for environmental education to deepen understanding through cooperative interaction (Kasugai City Junior High School, 1994, 1995).

Increasing concerns in regards to the use of computers in cooperative learning should be mentioned. Educational use of computers in Japan is so far only for information processing like data collection and administration. It is considered primarily as a means of personal study, usage, and guidance, and thus is an unexploited tool for cooperative learning. Despite this view, computers have started to be used for the purpose of cooperative learning.

Educational Future of Cooperative Learning in Japan

Education in Japan has been criticized since the 1980s regarding fostering students as individuals because many educational systems disregard individual differences due to relatively large class sizes. A course of study produced in 1989 by the Ministry of Education underscored the teaching needs of individuals. Due to this, the study of instructional guidance (instruction strategies) and practical concern focused only on personal guidance.

However, can students' individuality grow only through personal guidance? Of course, students sometimes need personal guidance, but too much emphasis may lead to the erroneous impression that personal guidance aims at creating differences between students. It is in the human nature that people share where the foundation of individuality lies. We as teachers cannot foster individuality. All we can do is just facilitate a sound and vigorous educational environment and to wait for individuality to grow. Cooperative learning, supported by human trust, has brought positive educational outcomes even in countries that have cultural diversity. Therefore the theory of cooperative learning must be essential in the process of learning by human beings. Using cooperation that is a part of human nature can lead to an environment where children can develop their individuality.

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